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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 VILNIUS 000657

SIPDIS

STATE FOR PM/ISO, PM/RSAT, PM/PMAT, NEA/I, EAP AND EUR/NB

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [LH](#)

SUBJECT: LITHUANIA ON BOARD FOR IRAQ IN 2006

REF: A. SECSTATE 111082 (NOTAL)

[B](#). TITOLO/JACKSON E-MAIL 06/21/05

Classified By: Political/Economic Officer Alexander Titolo for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: President Valdas Adamkus, Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis, and Defense Minister Gediminas Kirkilas told the Ambassador in separate meetings that they fully expect Lithuania to remain part of the Coalition in Iraq (MNF-I) and Lithuanian personnel to be on the ground in Iraq in 2006. The Ambassador thanked the GOL leadership for Lithuania's steady contribution to freedom and democracy in Iraq, and he previewed the strategic vision for the future. The President and the Ministers were receptive to the idea of shifting the emphasis of MNF-I's efforts to building Iraqi capacity and supported in principle the idea of embedding MNF-I forces within Iraqi units contingent on answers to certain technical questions. Barring unforeseeable events, the MNF-I mission will likely continue to enjoy broad support in Lithuania. Given the GOL's resolute commitment to the mission in Iraq, the prospects for continued Lithuanian participation in MNF-I through 2006 are excellent. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (S) Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis told the Ambassador on June 20 that Lithuania's involvement in the Iraq coalition is "going smoothly," and there is "no big discussion internally" challenging the current policy. Valionis said that only Lithuanian troops suffering significant casualties could lead to a withdrawal from Iraq. Under such a scenario, he said, "things could change quickly." Valionis stated that Lithuania's troops will come home as soon as they have fulfilled their mission of building a democratic and secure Iraq. He expressed hope that the drafting of an Iraqi constitution will be an important step in this process.

[1](#)3. (S) President Adamkus was equally upbeat when he met the Ambassador June 20, but pressed for details about the command structure for embedded MNF-I units/individuals. He said it would be impossible to defend to Parliament a plan that would subordinate Lithuanian troops to Iraqi commanders. Adamkus said that, these concerns aside, the USG can expect Lithuania to stay in Iraq through 2006. (PM/ISO (ref b) confirmed plans for "parallel" lines of command and noted that the intention is for MNF-I forces to mentor the Iraqis, not command or report to them. We will convey this information to President Adamkus and others in the GOL at the soonest opportunity.) Adamkus observed that there has been little domestic controversy over the Iraq mission, and said he expects this will remain the case.

[1](#)4. (S) The Ambassador, accompanied by his British counterpart, delivered reftel points to Defense Minister Gediminas Kirkilas and Chief of Defense Major General Valdas Tutkus. Kirkilas noted that the recent parliamentary action raising the ceiling for personnel deployable to foreign operations through the end of 2006 provided the GOL the authorization and flexibility it needs to extend Lithuania's commitment in Iraq. Kirkilas explained that a "gentleman's agreement" compels him to notify the President, the Prime Minister, and Parliamentary leaders that the GOL plans to commit to MNF-I for 2006, but noted he foresees no obstacle or objection to continuing Lithuanian participation in the mission. He characterized opposition to Lithuania's presence in Iraq as all but non-existent. Kirkilas said he believes the formation of an Iraqi government illustrates that the Coalition is making progress in Iraq. Drafting a constitution, he said, is the next important step.

[1](#)5. (S) Major General Tutkus confirmed that the GOL intends to consolidate its presence in Iraq, merging under Danish authority the platoon-size Lithuanian units currently reporting to the Polish and Danish commands. Tutkus said that the GOL would not, however, move its officers at the UK regional command. Kirkilas and Tutkus also said that the GOL is considering increasing its contribution to the Iraq training mission from four to 10 trainers.

[1](#)6. (S) The MOD's International Relations Director Alvydas Kunigelis requested additional detail on plans to embed MNF-I forces with Iraqis, and stressed the need for close mil-mil cooperation on this issue. His specific concern, which he

said is shared throughout the military, is that Lithuanian soldiers lack experience to serve in training roles. We assured Kunigelis that we believe the experience the Lithuanian troops have gained in Iraq can be very useful to Iraqis.

17. (S) COMMENT: Lithuania's leadership, in this and previous governments, has consistently maintained a political commitment to Coalition goals in Iraq -- and backed it up with troops. The Ambassador's consultations this week with Lithuania's three top foreign policy and security leaders indicate that this steadfastness remains rock-solid.
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